



REPORT OF THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT

The charge of the Alton Planning Department is multifaceted. The more visible aspect of the Planning Department is to provide professional oversight to both the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment as they deal with the individual land development cases brought before them. As important, but often less visible, is the Planning Department's effort to keep the Town's Zoning Ordinances reflective of current development trends which affect the quality of life in Alton.

Long-range comprehensive planning is very much a major responsibility of the planning department and its boards; particularly in today's arena of rapid economic, technological and sociological changes and pressures. Preserving the integrity of the physical and cultural aspects which are the bedrock of the Town's identity while remaining flexible enough to weather change is at the core of the Planning Department's mission. A customer-oriented approach to serving the citizens of Alton and providing educational resources to the public is also an integral part of our professional outreach.

In July of 2007, the fulltime position of Town Planner was filled by Sharon Penney of Franconia, a long-time planner from New Hampshire's North Country. Peer Kraft-Lund served admirably as the Town's interim planner on several occasions over the last two years and his expertise and amiability are greatly appreciated. Former Planning Department employees Monica Jerkins and Sheila Jacobs both left the Town's employ in 2007 to seek out other opportunities.

Shortly after Ms. Penney's arrival, the Planning Technician position was revamped and retitled to that of Planning Assistant. Stacey Ames of Wolfeboro filled that vacancy and became the newest member of the Planning team. In August, Randy Sanborn of Gilmanton served as a temporary secretary for the Department and in November, came aboard to permanently fill that vacancy.

The Planning Department is now fully staffed, bringing a wide variety of experience and education to the planning process. Our efforts dovetail with a well-integrated relationship to colleagues in the Building and Code Enforcement and Assessing Departments.

The 2007 Alton Planning Board, which consists of Tom Hoopes, Chair; Bruce Holmes, Vice-chair, along with four (4) full time members, two (2) alternates and one (1) Selectmen's Representative, considered 14 Subdivisions, 7 Site Plans, 10 Boundary Line Adjustments, 5 Voluntary Lot Line Mergers, and 15 Design Review/Conceptual Consultations over the past 12 months. There were 45 new lots created in Alton in 2007, which represents a 55 percent decrease in development activity since the end of 2006.



The Zoning Board of Adjustment members Timothy Kinnon, Chair; Timothy Morgan, Vice-chair, along with three (3) full time Board members, two (2) Alternates, and one (1) Selectmen's Liaison also saw a decrease in activity for the year 2007 with 14 Variances, 7 Special Exceptions, and 1 Conceptual Consultation being reviewed. There were only two (2) applications withdrawn in 2007, a large decrease from last year's ten (10) withdrawals.

The Planning Department has several on-going projects to ring in the New Year. The two baseline chapters of the Alton Master Plan update have been completed and officially accepted. These *Vision* and *Land Use* chapters provide a foundation for the rationale behind the Alton Zoning ordinances and subsequent planning and zoning decisions by the relevant boards. We look forward to working with the Alton Historical Society, Downtown Revitalization Committee and other civic and cultural groups to create a holistic planning outlook which truly reflects Alton's past, present and future character.

Subcommittees are being formed to continue work on the Master Plan update, adding additional chapters in categories such as population, housing, historic resources, transportation and other areas which will help guide the continued growth of Alton. The Planning Board also hopes to reformat the Zoning Ordinances to allow for a more user friendly layout. Additionally, the Board proposed the amendment of several Zoning Ordinances to be presented to the public at Town Meeting in March.

The Planning Department would like to whole heartedly thank each and every volunteer member of our Boards for their continued hard work and dedication in keeping Alton a safe and beautiful community for all to enjoy. We ask that every resident bear in mind what a special place Alton is and to work collaboratively through their town government to ensure it remains that way for future citizens.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Penney, Town Planner

Stacey Ames, Planning Assistant

Randy Sanborn, Planning Secretary

